Facultade de Filoloxía

GATSBY, LOMAN, DRAPER:

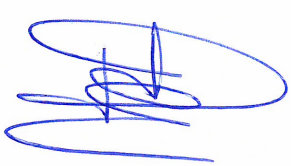
The American Dream in Prose, Drama and Television

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

Curso 2017/2018

Alumno: Ramón Jesús Carballo de Santiago

Titora: Patricia Fra López



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The American Dream is undeniably an essential part of American identity. However, it is not an easy concept to define. Although the name, "The American Dream", was popularized by James Truslow Adams in 1931, numerous artists and scholars have explored this concept in their work.

In this dissertation, my goal is to analyze the topic of the American Dream in three different fictional texts: a novel, a play and a television series. These three texts are set in the twentieth century and portray white American men in the leading roles. I intend to draw comparisons between the Dreams of these characters in each story and contextualize them in their particular historical period as well as in the larger scope of American history. Among other critical and historical texts, Jim Cullen's *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* has proved to be a very useful resource, as it thoroughly examines Upward Mobility, Equality and Home Ownership as different manifestations of the American Dream.

The texts on which my analysis will be focusing are F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman*, and Matthew Weiner's television series *Mad Men*. The analysis of the main characters, Jay Gatsby, Willy and Biff Loman and Don Draper as embodiments of the American Dream, will be the unifying thread of my research.

Santiago de Compostela, 06 de novembro de 2017.

SRA. DECANA DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidenta da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

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1. Introduction

Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, Miller's Willy Loman and Weiner's Don Draper as embodiments of the American Dream are used as devices to comment on America's biggest national myth. The study of different representations of the Dream across different genres and time periods allows us to establish which are the most common ideas that artists, in general, focus on when dealing with this topic in their work. The first section of this thesis will provide a general definition of what I have come to understand by the term "American Dream" and comment on how this concept applies the characters that I will be analyzing. The following three sections will be entirely devoted to character analysis among the characters. Each of these sections will deal with a particular theme related to the Dream: identity, desire and time. Having read ample literature on these three characters, I came to the conclusion that these are the themes which most clearly represent the national myth in these works.

Choosing these three characters in particular was not an arbitrary decision as there are many similarities between them. The thought that initially sparked the idea for this comparison occurred to me while watching *Mad Men* for the first time. At that time, I realized that Don Draper's wish to belong in a different world to the one he was brought up in reminded me of Gatsby's own quest for acceptance. Later, after reading *Death of a Salesman*, I saw that Willy Loman also followed a similar pattern. These three characters were all outsiders and feelings of estrangement and isolation set them on a constant search for acceptance. Through an analysis of the aforementioned themes in relation to characters' dreams, this paper will explore the central role that the American dream plays in different works of American fiction.

2. The American Dream: A Brief Definition.

The American Dream is a far more complex idea than it may appear at first sight. For the sake of clarity, the purpose of this opening section is to provide a general definition of the concept as I have come to understand it. However, before diving into any nuances, it seems useful to examine the meaning of the word "dream" by itself. One of the definitions in the OED states that a dream is: "A vision or hope for the future; (in early use chiefly) a vain hope or idle fantasy; (now also) an ideal, goal, ambition, or aspiration." This definition raises the following question: is the American Dream an idle fantasy or a legitimate aspiration? I believe the answer is **not just one** of them, but rather a **mixture** of both. Having a dream entails a degree of uncertainty regarding its fulfillment. Should it be proven that dreams are no more than mere fantasies, nobody would bother pursuing lofty goals. Furthermore, should they respond to a rational formula, there would be no mystery or mythical quality to them. The power of dreaming relies on this uncertainty, it depends on people believing in the possibility of one's ambitions being realized or, as Jim Cullen says: "ambiguity is the very source of its [the American Dream's] mythic power." (7).

Within the same definition, the OED provides a more specific sense: "With *the*. A national aspiration or ambition; (now *esp*.) a way of life considered to be ideal by a particular nation or (in extended use) other group of people (usually specified in a modifying adjective)". James Truslow Adams, in *The Epic of America*, gives this national aspiration the name of the American Dream: “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man” (317). However, as Adams himself realizes[1], this definition is still somewhat vague as it doesn't address what "better, richer and fuller" might mean for each particular individual. The reason for that is because it can't, there are countless ways to seek happiness and, as Jim Cullen states, "beyond an abstract belief in possibility, there is no *one* American Dream." (+’7).

Now that we have established that the American Dream is, broadly, representative of the aspirations of the people of America, it seems appropriate to discuss what makes it particularly theirs. Capacity for hope and belief in possibility aren't qualities which are exclusive to Americans as they are inherently human. If the goals of Americans aren't necessarily any different than those of any other person, why then, make a distinction? Jim Cullen argues that this collective national myth or aspiration is intrinsically related to the country’s history:

[1] “It is easy to say a better and richer life for all men, but what *is* better and what *is* richer?” (Adams 320).

> What makes the *American* Dream American is not that our dreams are any better, worse, or more interesting than anyone else's, but that we live in a country constituted of dreams, whose very justification continues to rest on it being a place where one can, for better and worse, pursue distant goals. (182).

According to Cullen, America is a land that was built upon dreams; the first generation of Americans laying the foundations for the next to pursue their goals, and these, in turn, for the next, and so on. Cullen is not the only writer who seems to interpret the "Americanness" of the Dream in this manner. Literary critic David Stouck compares the American Dream to the pastoral imagination because for him, the value that America has always placed on the individual, presents him with the possibility of reshaping his world in accordance to his ideal version of it:

> the American experience, with its expanding frontier and unlimited resources for individual power, has provided the outsider with the opportunity of proving himself worthy. Such an opportunity is virtually non-existent in older, highly structured societies (Stouck 68).

This shared history of a people's pursuit and, in some cases, fulfillment of their dreams is what bestowed upon the American territory the status of a Promised Land where the dreams of its people were likely to come true.

2.1. The Dream of the Outsider

As stated earlier, the American Dream can be achieved in many different manners depending on the aspirations of the dreamer. However, it is not uncommon for people to share similar goals, thus making it possible to establish a set of categories that allow us to label the most paradigmatic dreams. In his book, Cullen names six different types of American Dreams[2] but also notes that there are many others and that his book's goal was "to be suggestive rather than exhaustive" (9). For this reason, I felt that the most appropriate label for the name of the dream of the characters that are going to be analyzed in this essay is: The Dream of the Outsider.

Gatsby, Loman and Draper are portrayed as outsiders who feel displaced in their societies but are determined to change their status through a potent wish to belong. Although it may appear that their goals are oriented towards upward mobility, moving up in society appears to be more of a means to an end for them than a goal in itself. Arthur accurately described the aspirations of the outsider as those of "the individual attempting to gain his

[2] The categories proposed by Cullen are: The Dream of the Puritans, The Declaration of Independence (as the charter of the Dream), the Dream of Upward Mobility, the Dream of Equality, the Dream of Home Ownership and the Dream of the Coast (8-9).

"rightful" position in his society" (Miller, *Tragedy* 1). Just as with "better, richer and happier," the meaning of "rightful" is not universal. Driven by feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, each of the characters attempts to find a place in the world compatible with his particular sense of self. The three of them share this same wish and follow similar paths in trying to fulfill their Dreams, thus being inevitably confronted with questions about who they are and who they want to become. I have found that most critics who have previously analyzed these characters tend to focus on three fundamental issues pertaining to the quest of the American dreamer. Perhaps the most significant is his identity crisis, a need to redefine oneself to fulfill societal expectations. This could be considered the trigger or jumping off point in the quest for acceptance. Second and equally important is the fact that the dreamer must have an aspiration or object of desire that drives him forward, like the holy grail for the crusaders. And, last but not least, it is necessary to discuss the influence of time and memory and how the dreamer tries to distort or deny them to create the perfect conditions for their objective to be achieved.

3. Identity Crisis: The Bedrock of Self-Realization

If we were to interpret Gatsby, Willy and Don as tragic heroes, according to Arthur Miller, nonconformity would be their tragic flaw. Miller describes nonconformity as: "[the hero's] inherent willingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status" (Miller *Tragedy* 1). The challenge that these characters face is none other than finding their suitable place in the world. In order to do so, they undergo an identity crisis, trying to become a version of themselves that would no longer be alienated from the world they wish to inhabit.

Jimmy Gatz wanted to be something more than the son of "shiftless and unsuccessful farm people" (Fitzgerald 95) so, at the age of seventeen, he became the "son of God". Carraway tells us that Jay Gatsby "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself" (95), but I would argue that perhaps Gatsby also responds, to a degree, to an Emersonian image of the ideal self. Gatsby possesses qualities that Emerson would attribute to a man of genius in his essay *Self-Reliance*, such as self-trust and nonconformity. Nick provides us with proof of Gatsby's self-trust when he tells us that he never stopped believing in the identity he had created, "he was faithful to the end" to his ideal self (Fitzgerald 95); a self that could be defined as the quintessential expression of nonconformity through his "gift for hope" and "romantic readiness" (Fitzgerald 8).

As I have previously mentioned, self-definition is a subjective process. Gatsby and Draper, for example, are both outsiders and nonconformists who strive to find their place in the world, and although hope and romantic disposition aren't the first things that come to mind when one pictures Don Draper's cynical view on life, there are many similarities between him and Gatsby that are worth noting.

Both characters experienced identity crises that led them to abandon their former identities. Draper was originally born Dick Whitman to a prostitute and raised in a brothel by a man he called uncle Mack and his wife Abigail. Whitman/Draper didn't have a very happy childhood so, when he was drafted for the Korean War, he saw the opportunity to abandon his former life. After accidentally causing his commanding officer’s death, Dick switched dog tags with him, the real Donald Francis Draper, who would have been sent home sooner than him. Like Gatsby, Draper wanted to escape a life that he didn't want for himself and move on to secure his "rightful" position in the world. However, despite his best efforts, Don never managed to completely shake off the shadow of Dick Whitman the way Gatsby did James Gatz's.

Don's divided self created an emotional conflict inside him. In episode 1.05 “Five G”, Draper had an encounter with his younger half-brother Adam, who had believed for years that he was dead. Adam loved his brother, and he wanted to be a part of his life again, but his mere presence jeopardized the identity that Don had created by threatening to expose his past. Don loved Adam too, in his own way, but he also believed that "love was invented by guys like [him] to sell nylons" (1.01 “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes”), so he did the most Don Draper thing he could do and offered his brother five thousand dollars to get out of his life.

Desperate for love, Adam was to be offered cash[3]. This kind of monetization of love is also present in *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Willy Loman commits suicide in order to cash in his life insurance because he believes that by dying he would actually helping his son Biff. Both Willy and Don have their own clear sense of how things should be and often make self-centered decisions in lieu of the people they care about. Just as Willy thought he was doing the best thing for his family when he decided to end his life, Don believed he was doing right by his brother when he told him to take the money and leave, that he was offering him an opportunity to experience the same rebirth that he had undergone by becoming Donald Draper.

The acts of these three characters might be explained through their suffering from feelings of both guilt and shame. Fred Ribkoff illustrates the key difference between these similar emotions by using the following quote from Bernard Williams' *Shame and Necessity*:

> ... It [guilt] can direct one towards those who have been wronged or damaged, and demand reparation in the name, simply, of what has happened to them. But it cannot by itself help one to understand one’s relations to those happenings, or to rebuild the self that has done these things and the world in which that self has to live. Only shame can do that, because it embodies conceptions of what one is and of how one is related to others (qtd. in Ribkoff 122).

In other words, guilt is an internal feeling that affects only the individual who suffers from it whereas shame is a social emotion, as it relates to how the individual feels he is perceived by others. Ribkoff's essay has been a very useful resource in helping me understand these concepts in relation to the character of Willy Loman, as I believe that the salesman's feelings of shame and guilt are akin to those of Gatsby and Draper.

Ribkoff explains that Willy Loman was driven toward suicide by his feelings of shame and guilt. Feeling guilty for having failed to help Biff get ahead in life and ashamed of his own accomplishments as a man, Willy ends his life in order to preserve his sense of personal dignity

[3]See Bigsby, C.W.E. 1984, 176. "Desperate for love, they [Willy's family] are to be offered cash". I employed the same sentence structure that Bigsby used to refer to Willy's family to refer to Adam in order to underline the similarity between the actions of Willy and Don.

with an act he understood as sacrificial redemption. Similarly, Don's guilt led him to pay his brother off rather than to attempt to bond with him because his shame regarding his past identity made his brother's presence unbearable. Gatsby, in turn, had created a self that was as great as his capacity for wonder, but Jay Gatsby was born from James Gatz's feelings of inadequacy and inferiority as much as from his romantic imagination. When we learn about his visits to Daisy's house in Louisville, Nick states that "he knew he was in Daisy's house by a colossal accident", that "he was at present a penniless young man without a past" and that "he had no real right to touch her hand" (Fitzgerald 141,142). Gatsby experiences feelings of guilt for leading Daisy to believe that he belonged among her kin and determines to become "worthy" of her by becoming wealthy.

Gatsby, Willy and Draper ended up monetizing love in an attempt to preserve their sense of self. There are differences, however, in the way they did it. Don and Gatsby strived to protect and maintain the identities they had created whereas Willy wanted to define himself by trying to leave a significant mark in the world. He attempts to do so through his son Biff, whom he conceived as a projection of his own self. Willy isn't capable of accepting the fact that Biff is a failure in the business world so, when Biff tries to make him see the truth Willy interrupts him and exposes his own failure: "I was fired, [...] don't give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I am not interested" (Miller, *Salesman* 84). Unlike Draper and Gatsby's, Willy Loman's identity crisis doesn't lead him to change his name, but to find meaning in it.

> BIFF: Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!
> WILLY [*turning on him now in an uncontrolled outburst*]: I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!
> [BIFF *starts for* WILLY, *but is blocked by* HAPPY. *In his fury,* BIFF *seems on the verge of attacking his father*.]
> BIFF: I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ashcan like all the rest of them!

In this passage from the play Willy's identity is brought into question by the person he loves the most, his son Biff. He tries to refute his son's words by asserting their family name, as if it alone endowed its bearer with meaning and purpose. Willy needs to cling to his name because he doesn't really know who he is, which leads him to feel "kind of temporary about [himself]" (Miller, *Salesman* 40). Because of this, he attempts to find his place in the world as a member of a family that he claims has had "quite a little streak of self-reliance" (Miller, *Salesman* 63) and have their legacy continue through Biff.

To choose a name for oneself, whether created, stolen or one's own, is a sign of a search for identity. A name is usually one of the first things that people identify a person with, so it seems reasonable to assume that in order to belong and be perceived by others in a desired way, one's name must agree with the individual's own sense of self. Jimmy Gatz created Jay Gatsby because his former name entailed feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, Dick Whitman saw that Draper's name would be his one-way ticket out of a miserable life and Willy Loman longed to be another hero of the Loman family, commensurate with the idealized conceptions he had of his father and brother.

Nonetheless, one could argue that self-naming, despite its purpose, is an act devoid of significance, as Stephen Barker does:

> But if the self, so-called, is a palimpsest of texts written over one another, and if the original inscription, the apocryphal true identity, is chimerical, then the self is a system of dysfunctional metaphors in which, while one is always trying to "make one's mark," that mark is always a sign of absence (44).

Willy's friend Charley seems to agree with Barker's statement. When Willy tells Charley that his boss Howard fired him, he is outraged because he was the one who had suggested his boss's name to his father. Charley responds by saying: "Willy, when're you gonna realize that them things don't mean anything? You named him Howard, but you can't sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell." (Miller, *Salesman* 76, 77).

3.1. The Advertisement of the Man

The theme underlying the previous conversation between Willy and Charley has to do with their different approaches to realizing the American Dream. Jim Cullen explored people's different takes on the Dream, stating that: "Some versions of the American Dream stressed the value of hard work for its own sake; others recognized it as a necessary evil, but one that afforded the promise of a leisurely life of many happy returns on profitable investments." (176). Charley's version of the Dream seems to agree with the one that Cullen proposes in which hard work is viewed as a means to an economically profitable end. He makes this clear to Willy when he proposes J.P. Morgan as an example of success: "Why must everybody like you? Who liked J.P. Morgan? In a Turkish bath he'd look like a butcher. But with his pockets on he was very well liked" (Miller, *Salesman* 77). Willy believed that success meant being "impressive, and well liked" (77). His version of the Dream appears to be closer to what Cullen describes as a dream based on personality, illustrating his idea through the figures of Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford: "the appeal of Doug and Mary rested less on what they did or what they

acquired than on playing themselves. Simply being Doug and Mary was in itself perceived to be desirable (and profitable)." (176-177). Cullen also stated that, in this version of the American Dream, "A charismatic personality makes and breaks his own rules, succeeding in business without really trying" (177).

Willy tries to play the role of a successful businessman because of his obsession with appearances but, at the same time, he is also aware of the harsh reality of his situation. When he attempts to put up a front, he ends up contradicting himself. He tells Linda: "Oh, I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford" (Miller, *Salesman* 28). He tries to deceive both his wife and himself by making it seem as if he were perceived as a successful salesman only to contradict his statement with his next sentence: "You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don't seem to take to me" (28). There are many instances in the play in which Willy makes a statement only to go back on his own words immediately. For example, he says that Biff is a "lazy bum" (11) and a couple of lines later that "there's one thing about Biff - he's not lazy" (11). At the beginning of the play he complains about how "you can't raise a carrot in the backyard" (11) but, at the beginning of the second act, he tells Linda: "on the way home tonight I'd like to buy some seeds" (55). He hurries to buy the seeds towards the end of the play and attempts to plant them just before taking his life. Metaphorically, the seeds are linked to Willy's legacy: "Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground" (96). Luc Gilleman argues that the seeds are a symbol of an ideal masculinity, as it becomes equated with "nature and fertility, not with reality but with imagination, and not with competition but with manly comradeship and adventure" (156).

Willy also believes that success should come without effort. When Linda tries to reassure her insecure husband by telling him that he's earning good money, Willy replies by saying: "But I gotta be at it ten, twelve hours a day. Other men—I don’t know—they do it easier" (Miller, *Salesman* 28). Willy is a salesman who is constantly trying to sell himself or, rather an image of himself. However, Willy's is not an isolated case, but a social problem on a larger scale. According to Steven Centola, Willy Loman and many Americans like him "are trained to believe that their self-worth rests entirely on their profit margin or net worth" (32). Consequently, they chase a Dream that confers more value to ostentation and wealth than to simplicity and love. Willy wants to be a good husband and a good father, but he ends up being unfaithful to his wife: “you gave her Mama’s stockings” and misguiding to his sons: “I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from any-body!” (Miller, *Salesman*, 104).

Willy's obsession with appearances leads him to attempt to deceive not only the world, but also himself and his family. As Batten (163) points out, Willy associates superficiality with success. He believes that a man "must be fine people" (Miller, *Salesman* 72) just because he owns a tennis court, he complains to Linda about their refrigerator being broken but when she tells him that it "had the biggest ads of any of them" (Miller, *Salesman* 27) he replies by saying: "I know, it's a fine machine", putting more trust in appearances than on reality and what he really thinks. Not only does he equate possessions and advertisements with success, but also physical appearance. He believes that he is failing in business because he is "fat" and "foolish to look at", because people laugh at him and call him "walrus" (Miller, *Salesman* 29) while he is convinced that his sons are destined for a bright future because they are "built like Adonises" and "the man who makes an appearance in the business world […] is the man who gets ahead" (Miller, *Salesman* 29). Biff's statement at the end of the play: we never told the truth for ten minutes in this house" (Miller, *Salesman* 104) exposes the family's obsession with appearances in his final confrontation with his father in the climax of the play and Willy is finally forced to examine himself without the filter of deception.

Financially, Gatsby was far more successful than Willy but, despite his affluence, he too was obsessed with appearances. Before he created his name, Gatsby was a nobody, just a boy from a farm in the Midwest. He believed that by becoming rich and acting like somebody from the upper class he would be able to erase the social gap between the wealthy and himself. Before resolving to become Jay Gatsby, young James Gatz had made himself a schedule and a list of general resolves which closely resembled Benjamin Franklin's own schedule and list of thirteen virtues (Franklin 82-83) which he recorded in his autobiography.

James Gatz's schedule	Benjamin Franklin's schedule
Rise from bed ..... 6.00 A.M. Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling..... 6.15–6.30 " Study electricity, etc. ..... 7.15–8.15 " Work ..... 8.30–4.30 P.M. Baseball and sports ..... 4.30–5.00 " Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it .. 5.00–6.00 " Study needed inventions ..... 7.00–9.00 "	

James Gatz's resolves	Benjamin Franklin's 13 virtues
GENERAL RESOLVES No wasting time at Shafters or [a name, indecipherable] No more smokeing or chewing. Bath every other day Read one improving book or magazine per week Save $5.00 [crossed out] $3.00 per week Be better to parents	1. TEMPERANCE. Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation. 2. SILENCE. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation. 3. ORDER. Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time. 4. RESOLUTION. Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve. 5. FRUGALITY. Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing. 6. INDUSTRY. Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions. 7. SINCERITY. Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly. 8. JUSTICE. Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty. 9. MODERATION. Avoid extreams; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve. 10. CLEANLINESS. Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, cloaths, or habitation. 11. TRANQUILLITY. Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable. 12. CHASTITY. Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dulness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation. 13. HUMILITY. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

The parallels between both characters' schedules and resolves are clear but, as Floyd C. Watkins (251) points out, they result in a comparison that seems to belittle and mock Jimmy Gatz's efforts in relation to those of his ancestor. However, three of the activities in Gatz's schedule don't match any of Franklin's. His "practise elocution, poise and how to attain it" has nothing to do with Franklin's virtue of "sincerity" and "dumbell exercise and wall-scaling" and "baseball and sports" don't resemble Franklin's arguably more "intellectual" leisure activity: "music or diversion, or conversation".

The similarities between the two characters function as a symbol of young Gatz's pristine dream but the differences highlight his shortcomings in trying to achieve it. Jimmy Gatz, more like Willy Loman than like Benjamin Franklin, conferred a great deal of importance to appearances. Practicing sports was meant to keep him looking fit and elocution and poise would prove useful to charm his way through any given situation, for example, with a smile which Nick describes as: "one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it" and "understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood" (Fitzgerald 49). In spite of Gatsby's charming smile, Nick correctly assumes that Gatsby is probably posturing: "I was looking at an elegant rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd" (Fitzgerald 49).

Contradictions in Gatsby's personality are further reinforced through Fitzgerald's use of oxymoron[4] throughout the novel. On the one hand, people tell stories about Gatsby being "a bootlegger" and having "killed a man" (Fitzgerald 60) but on the other hand, he is portrayed as being a rather shy and well-mannered gentleman or, as Nick put it: "an elegant rough-neck" (49). He is a character shrouded in mystery who becomes, for many, a sort of mythological figure. He is thought to be the descendant of a wealthy family, an Oxford student a German spy, a murderer... Many of the rumors about him were invented by the guests at his parties, but Gatsby himself was also a contributor to his partygoers' fictions. He combined their fabricated stories with real facts about his life. For example, when he tells Nick about his past for the first time, Gatsby is trying to create a background of his early life composed by unlikely tales which Nick only believes once his neighbor shows him physical proof in the form of a medal he received from the Montenegrin government and a photograph from his short stay at Oxford.

Like Willy Loman's, Gatsby's dream is based on personality. Gatsby displays "an unbroken series of successful gestures" (Fitzgerald 8) instead of attempting to accept who he is. He puts up his front because he doesn't want to be taken for a "cheap sharper" (144) in the eyes of the Tom Buchanans of the world, but he can't seem stop them from calling him out for being "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere" (123), a misfit in their closed society of old money. Gatsby's charade was ephemerous, but for a moment he was, as Daisy put it: "the advertisement of the man" (114).

Willy and Gatsby's characters experience of American reinvention turned into failure and ultimately death. Nevertheless, both of them "turned out all right in the end" (Fitzgerald

[4] See Hays (2011) for a detailed analysis of oxymoron in the novel. According to Hays, the reason that this literary device is so prominent in the novel is that Fitzgerald had "[an] awareness of doublenesses and contradictions in America, and he strove to record them" (322).

8), finding redemption in death. They are presented as "alienated and dispossessed dreamers of the golden dream [who] understand the difficulty and maybe even the futility, of standing up to a system that denies them the right to express their unique personalities" (Centola 44). They embrace appearances because they are victims of their society. As Fitzgerald wrote: "it was what preyed on Gatsby[5], what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men" (Fitzgerald 8). The world in which these characters live taints their arguably noble aspirations because what matters to society is what is on the surface rather than what lies beneath.

On the contrary, through Don Draper's story, *Mad Men* will attempt to prove that death isn't a *conditio sine qua non* for the redemption of a character that has overvalued appearances for far too long. Spanning over 72 episodes and seven seasons, the series portrays Don's rise, fall and his opportunity for redemption as he struggles with questions of self-definition and authenticity in a world that confers more value to appearances than to anything else. As Don's boss Bert Cooper tells Pete Campbell when the latter exposed Draper's theft of identity:

> Who cares? This country was built and run by men with worse stories than whatever you've imagined here. […] A man is whatever room he is in, and right now Donald Draper is in this room. I assure you, there's more profit in forgetting this. I'd put your energy into bringing in accounts (1.12 "Nixon vs Kennedy").

Don is a productive member at his firm and, as far as Bert is concerned, that is all that matters: the world does not care about who you are, but about who you say you are.

From the first episode of the series Don is presented as a person leading a double life, hiding who he truly is because it would be unacceptable in society. In the series premiere, he is introduced with a camera pan that moves across a crowded bar to finally zoom in on an over the shoulder close-up of the protagonist. While everybody in the bar is drinking in company, Don sits alone at a table trying to figure out how to come up with an ad pitch for Lucky Strike. Throughout the episode (and most of the series), he is always in command of the room he inhabits. His charm is reminiscent of Gatsby's, but he tends to keep to himself instead of being talkative like Fitzgerald's protagonist[6]. However, like a good ad man, he does lead the conversations he has wherever he wants them to go. He is admired by his co-workers and coveted by women, he drinks, he smokes and always looks cool and confident even when he

[5] And also, on Willy.

[6] See Goren, Lily J. 39 for a more detailed comparison between Gatsby and Draper's different ways of using their charm.

goes unprepared to a sales pitch: he was the model of ideal masculinity in the sixties. However, what Draper is really doing is constructing a persona.

Towards the end of the episode, while discussing womanhood and love with his soon to be lover Rachel Menken, he tells her that: "You're born alone, and you die alone, and this world just drops a bunch of rules on you to make you forget those facts, but I never forget" (1.01 "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"). After this remark, Rachel realizes that there is something wrong with Don. She sees through his cynicism and picks him for the lonely outsider he is underneath the surface. She replies to Don's statement by telling him that being a man must also be hard and, sympathizing with his loneliness, she says:

> I don't think I realized it until this moment, but it must be hard being a man, too. […] I don't know what it is you really believe in, but I do know what it feels like to be out of place, to be disconnected, to see the whole world laid out in front of you the way other people live it. There is something about you that tells me you know it, too" (1.01 "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes").

Don's body language and facial expression indicate that his initial response to Rachel's remark was one of bewilderment at how a woman would even consider that being a man could be difficult. However, when Rachel begins to talk about being an outsider, herself being a woman and a Jew in the world of business, Don's expression of bewilderment turns into an attentive gaze fixed upon his conversational partner. Just after Rachel says "disconnected", the frame cuts to Don's face, now looking serious and quiet. The stillness in this shot contrasts with the swaggering attitude and body language that he had displayed previously in this scene: Rachel had caught his attention. After she finishes her statement, Don's gaze remains fixed on her for a moment after which he looks away and then down in a display of discomfort as he says: "I don't know if that's true" (1.01 "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"). Don continues to look around, as if looking for something that could bail him out of a situation in which he would have exposed himself and tries to get himself together and conceal his feelings by offering his partner a drink, which she politely refuses before leaving.

This scene with Rachel and Don seemed like the climax of the episode, a moment of revelation which provided a small glimpse into the complexity of Don's hidden identity. However, the final scene ends with a twist that shows that what we have seen so far was merely the tip of the iceberg: the drinking, boastful and philandering ad executive is also a married man with two children. Much like Willy and Gatsby's, Don Draper's life is filled with lies and false appearances that prevent him from establishing meaningful connections with those close to him as he doesn't allow them to see the face beneath his mask.

Despite the fact that Don did have strong feelings for his wife and family, he failed miserably to be a good husband and father because, in reality, it was all for show. This is made evident in episode 1.13 “The Wheel” when Don uses images of his family in a sales pitch for the new Kodak slide projector. Don’s idea was that the projector could take you to a place and time where you longed to go, and he made his point by using pictures of happy moments with his family for the slides. The executives wanted to call their product “The Wheel”, but Don explained that “Carousel” was more fitting given that the projector allowed its user to travel back and forth like a child in an amusement park. His pitch was a great success, but the pictures he had selected were far from being an accurate portrait of his everyday family life.

The truth was that Don had actually been trying to avoid being with his family. At the beginning of the episode he makes it clear to his wife that he doesn’t want to spend Thanksgiving with her family. She asks him: “I don't understand why you can't make my family your family” (1.13 “The Wheel”*)* and he simply looks away in silence and turns off the light. For Don, family serves the purpose of being a front in the public eye, something you just need to have in order to fit in. In the final scene of this episode, Don gets home and finds his wife and children packed and ready to go and spend Thanksgiving with Betty’s family. He tells them that he has decided to go with them and his children hug him, and his wife is happy – except for the fact that he had imagined the whole scene on his way home and all he found when he got back home was an empty house.

As the series progresses, keeping up appearances becomes more and more difficult for Don. He eventually divorces Betty, drinks more heavily and is even put on leave from the advertising firm which he helped to create. His leave was a direct result of Don finally publicly acknowledging his origins. No longer able to maintain his façade, Don breaks down and reveals a story about his childhood in a sales pitch for Hershey:

> I was an orphan. I grew up in Pennsylvania in a whorehouse. I read about Milton Hershey and his school in "Coronet" magazine or some other crap the girls left by the toilet. And I read that some orphans had a different life there. I could picture it. I dreamt of it-- of being wanted. Because the woman who was forced to raise me would look at me every day like she hoped I would disappear. Closest I got to feeling wanted was from a girl who made me go through her John's pockets while they screwed. If I collected more than a dollar, she'd buy me a Hershey bar. And I would eat it alone in my room with great ceremony feeling like a normal kid. It said "Sweet" on the package. It was the only sweet thing in my life (6.13 “In Care Of”).

Instead of helping him to establish connections, the immediate result of Don’s act of sincerity was punishment. However, it set him on a path to try to find redemption in the final season of the show. In episode 7.7 “Waterloo”, Don has a vision of his recently deceased boss

Bert Cooper singing to him that "the best things in life are free". This realization became a turning point in Don's life. In the remaining episodes of the series, as showrunner Matthew Weiner states, Don "wants to start fresh"[7]. He begins this process by signing a check for one million dollars to his soon to be ex-wife Megan in episode 7.9 "New Business". He felt guilty for the way he had handled their marriage and wanted her to be as well off as possible. At the same time, by giving away his money, a material possession, he is able to set his spiritual rebirth in motion.

Two episodes later, Don's advertisement firm was absorbed by the giant McCann Erikson. McCann had been after Don for a long time and valued him as one of their most important members. However, the pleasure was not mutual. At his first meeting as a full member of McCann, Don feels out of place. The camera portrays the men at the table as robots, moving almost in perfect sync, and nodding simultaneously as they turned the pages of their briefs.

Uninterested by the meeting, Don stares out the window and watches as a plane flies through the sky. That must have reminded him that, while discussing strategies for advertising Mohawk Airlines all the way back in season two, he had said: "you want to get on a plane to feel alive" (2.1 "For Those Who Think Young"). Don quietly left the meeting and set out on both a physical and a spiritual journey of self-discovery, driving his car through the Midwest of the United States without any clear destination in mind.

Don wants to strip himself from all the burdens that weigh him down in his quest for identity. From episode 7.12 "Lost Horizon" onward, he is never shown wearing his trademark grey suit. He dresses more casually and shows little or no regard for money and appearances. During his journey, Don is forced to confront his feelings of shame for having killed the real Donald Draper as well as the fact that he is lonely, an outcast, and all of his own making. In episode 7.13 "The Milk and the Honey Route," Don's car breaks down and so he must stay at a nearby inn until it gets repaired. The circumstances force him to attend a reunion of war veterans. Reluctantly at first, Don finally comes clean about having killed his commanding officer and the other veterans, instead of judging him, chant alongside him as a sign of support. At this point Don had ridden himself of one of his heaviest burdens, but he was not done yet. At the end of this episode, he gave away his car to a boy who worked at the inn but wanted to get away. In the final scene, Don sits at a bus stop waiting for a ride to California as Buddy

[7] Matthew Weiner on Mad Men: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UGt2a823Tc

Holly's "Everyday" plays in the background, implying that "every day" Don's quest of unburdening and self-definition is "a'gettin closer" to its end.

In the season finale, Don makes a phone call to each of the three most important women in his life. In the first one he talks to his daughter Sally, who tells him that Betty has cancer. Don's initial reaction is to say that he will take care of everything, but Sally stops him. She forces him to acknowledge that he isn't needed and that, if anything, he should just try to convince Betty that the best thing for her and her siblings would be to stay with her husband Henry. Consequently, Don's second call is to Betty. They argue about what is best for the children, but Betty finally says: "I want to keep things as normal as possible, and you not being here is part of that" (7.14 "Person to Person"). Don starts sobbing and simply says "Birdie" and, as a response to an unspoken but impossible "I love you", Betty replies "I know" as she starts to sob as well.

Don's final destination in the show is a communal retreat in California. However, before the end of his quest he reaches rock bottom during his third call, this time to his protégé, Peggy Olson. After she urges him to go back, he replies by saying: "I messed everything up, I'm not the man you think I am […] I broke all my vows, I scandalized my child, took another man's name - and made nothing of it" (7.14 "Person to Person"). He tells Peggy that he just wanted to call to say goodbye to her and hangs up, dropping to the ground, panting and sobbing, left now with nothing but a clean slate.

After composing himself, Don attends a seminar in which other people at the retreat share their pain. A man called Leonard starts telling his story:

> I go home and I watch my wife and my kids. They don't look up when I sit down. […] It's like no one cares that I'm gone. They should love me. I mean, maybe they do, but I don't even know what it is. You spend your whole life thinking you're not getting it, people aren't giving it to you. Then you realize they're trying and you don't even know what it is. I had a dream I was on a shelf in the refrigerator. Someone closes the door and the light goes off, and I know everybody's out there eating. And then they open the door and you see them smiling. And they're happy to see you, but maybe they don't look right at you, and maybe they don't pick you. And then the door closes again. The light goes off (7.14 "Person to Person").

Don sees himself reflected in Leonard's feelings of alienation and loneliness. Both of them are out of place and find it hard to understand the meaning of love. As he finishes his speech, Don walks over to Leonard and hugs him tightly as both men cry uncontrollably, sympathetic towards one another.

In the show's final scene, Don is shown attending a session of group meditation, wearing a white shirt that symbolizes that he now starts anew with a clean slate. This is

reinforced by the guru's final words before the group starts meditating: "The new day brings new hope. The lives we've led, the lives we've yet to lead. New day, new ideas, a new you" (7.14 "Person to Person").

4. Objects of Desire and Ego Ideals

The previous section dealt with the way the characters presented themselves to the world they wanted to belong to in order to achieve their objectives. In this section, we shall explore the objects of the characters' desires as well as the models that originated them.

> [H]e gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone - he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, as far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily, I glanced seaward - and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been at the end of a dock. (Fitzgerald 25).

The green light is subtly established as the holy grail of Gatsby's crusade in the first chapter of Fitzgerald's novel. Before the reader discovers anything about who Gatsby is or what he is actually after, he is presented as a distant figure yearning for a light that sits at the end of a dock. In a similar fashion to the poetic voice in Thomas Wyatt's *My Galley, Charged with Forgetfulness*, Gatsby remains "despairing of the port". Later on in the novel, we learn through a flashback to Gatsby's past that his first role model, or sponsor, was Dan Cody: a former prospector who devoted his retirement years to sailing around the continent in his yacht.

James Gatz met him by chance at the age of seventeen and was lured to him because, in his eyes, Cody's yacht stood for "all the beauty and glamour in the world"(Fitzgerald 96). Cody found the boy to be "quick and extravagantly ambitious" and decided to take him along in his travels as his protégé, "employed in a vague personal capacity" (Fitzgerald 96). However, in spite of its beauty, the yacht was still nothing but a vessel, a way to get from point A to point B - just like wealth for Gatsby was merely a means to a greater end. And although he never received the twenty-five-thousand-dollar inheritance that Cody willed him after he died, he had obtained something from him that would turn out to be much more valuable: "his singularly appropriate education" (Fitzgerald 97). The years Gatsby spent alongside Cody had served as his rite of passage, as he went from being a poor mid-western farm boy to a successful, charming and worldly young man.

After the war, this young man managed to charm Meyer Wolfshiem similarly to how he had done years earlier with Dan Cody. Captivated by his potential, the mobster took Cody's place as Gatsby's sponsor, — or perhaps Godfather seems more fitting as he claims to have "made" Gatsby (Fitzgerald 162). On the other hand, through Nick we know that Gatsby created himself out of his own imagination, rendering Wolshiem's statement apparently contrary to our conception of the protagonist. However, I interpret that in this case the word "made" refers to Gatsby having been fully initiated as a member of the mafia. I believe that Gatsby envisioned

the same beauty and glamour in the life of a "made man" as he did in Cody's yacht when he was younger. To him, the mafia was just another ship, but point B was still the green light, functioning as a compass and a beacon, leading him towards his goal, promising to satisfy his romantic imagination with a deserving prize. As John Kuehl states: “His immediate reaction to the life of wealth combines realism and romance. It is less the material possessions per se that interest him than the kind of life money might buy, a life which would fulfill the dreams of his romantic quest” (17).

One could say that Willy Loman is in the same boat as Gatsby, or rather, as his wife Linda claims, *is*, “a little boat looking for a harbor” (Miller, *Salesman* 59). He believed in his own green light, in a world of endless possibility that was just out of reach. Unlike Gatsby, however, Willy never really had a sponsor to take him under his wing and show him the way, but he did create what Leah Hadomi calls his "ego ideals". Because he never had a real father figure, Willy's imagination was nurtured by three idealized role models based on real men from his past: his father, his brother Ben and Dave Singleman. These characters, as Willy conceives them, exist only in the protagonist's imagination, but they play an important role in shaping Willy's life choices and parameters for self-definition.

We learn through his brother Ben that Willy was just three years and eleven months old when his father left their family to go to Alaska, yet he remained the most powerful influence in Willy's conception of the ideal man. Willy tells Ben: "All I remember is a man with a big beard, and I was in Mamma's lap, sitting around a fire, and some kind of high music" (Miller, *Salesman* 38). Ben then reminds his brother that their father played the flute, an instrument which he made with his own hands and also sold while travelling across the country in his wagon.

Leah Hadomi claims that Willy's father "is at once the untamed natural man and the westward-bound pioneer, the artisan, the great inventor, and the successful entrepreneur."(17). In Willy's imagination, his father was the embodiment of the flawless hero. Willy inherited his father's dexterity in manual labor. Charley and Linda claim that he was "a happy man with a batch of cement", and "so wonderful with his hands" (Miller, *Salesman* 110), that he had developed his father's love for the outdoors. However, despite the father's influence in shaping his son's sense of self, Willy envisioned him as an unattainable ideal, an incommensurate hero of the past, leading him to search for a more manageable vessel to self-realization.

Willy turned his gaze from his father to his brother Ben. Ben was ambitious and adventurous, and Willy regarded him as "the only man [he] ever met who knew the answers" (Miller, *Salesman* 35). In the play, Ben appears as a character that exists only in Willy's

imagination, but he constitutes the model of the man he wants to emulate and pass on to his sons. Like Willy's father, Ben could also be seen as an untamed man in contact with nature, but of a different kind. The father represented the countryside whereas the brother was an embodiment of the jungle; which is, as opposed to the country, a fierce and dangerous environment. Ben tells his brother: "when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. And by God I was rich" (37). Willy admired his brother's resolve but, despite his admiration, he was not the kind of man to "crack the jungle" (106), as Ben put it, so he forsook any idea of following his brother when he met Dave Singleman.

Singleman was the most realistic model that Willy set for himself. He represented a respectable alternative ideal to that of his brother as he was well-liked and respected but without the risk that went hand in hand with being an explorer:

> His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he'd drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave, he'd go up to his room, y'understand, put on his green velvet slippers - I'll never forget - and pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without even leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made a living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. (63).

Willy desired for himself the same kind of recognition that Singleman had, so he constantly stressed the importance of being well-liked throughout the play. However, he didn't simply imitate Singleman in order to achieve popularity, he also saw traces of the character of his father and brother in that of the salesman. In a reduced fashion, he emulates his father's contact with nature by going on the road and Ben's appetite for wealth by drumming on commission. However, I would argue that Willy didn't imitate these characters as an end in itself, but rather used them as his guides and as his means of traveling through life.

4.1 Women Commodified

> Her voice is full of money," he said suddenly. That was it. I'd never understood it before. It was full of money - that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the cymbals' song of it... High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl... (Fitzgerald 115)

As stated earlier, Gatsby didn't lust for wealth for its own sake; he envisioned riches as necessary in order to *buy* Daisy[8]. He was captivated by this golden girl, "the first 'nice' girl he had ever known" (Fitzgerald 141). Here, the adjective “nice” isn't describing Daisy as a person,

[8] See Fetterly 104: “Daisy does not simply represent or incarnate that magical world Gatsby desires; she is herself the ultimate object in it”.

but as a member of the wealthy, more accomodated social class. She is expensive, has a voice “full of money” and her value even increased in Gatsby's eyes because she was also coveted by many other men. Gatsby never really took interest in Daisy as a person, but rather in what she represented as the ultimate object of desire in the world in which he aspired to belong. When he first met Daisy, he was amazed by her house, for "he had never been in such a beautiful house before" (Fitzgerald 141), but what made the biggest impression on Gatsby was the fact that it was Daisy's: "it [the house] was as casual a thing to her as his tent out camp was to him" (Fitzgerald 141). Gatsby was determined to experience that feeling of “belonging” among the elite for himself, he wanted to become a part of her world and Daisy was the key to its gates, to being "safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor" (Fitzgerald 142).

One could argue that, to an extent, Don Draper managed to do something that Gatsby could not when he married the golden girl. His wife Betty embodied the archetypal American beauty: tall, blond, light skinned, delicate and descendant from a wealthy family. Don first charmed her with a display of spending power by buying her a fur jacket that she had worn at a photo shoot, a similar yet more modest approach than Gatsby's at wooing Daisy by showing off his mansion or his imported silk shirts. However, in finally achieving his goal, Don seemed to have made no progress: still longing for something more, even though he had achieved what he wanted initially. It would not be farfetched to assume that Gatsby would have experienced a similar feeling disenchantment had he managed to marry Daisy, as she could not have possibly been capable of measuring up to his colossal dream.

Like Gatsby, Don didn't want to be rich just for the sake of it, he wanted to be free from any restraints and to be loved for who he truly was. Don gradually earned more money throughout the story, and never hesitated to use it if he needed to. He also put himself in a position to continue earning tons of money but without compromising his freedom in the process. In episode 1.11 “Indian Summer” for example, Don is offered to become a partner of the firm, thereby also obtaining a substantial raise. However, he has one firm condition: "No contract"; for Draper, freedom seems to be priceless. Another instance of Don's choice of freedom over money appears in episode 1.09 “Shoot”, in which he receives an offer from McCann Erikson but turns it down because he doesn't want to work at a place which he believes

to be a "sausage factory"[9] although, as stated earlier, his firm would be absorbed by McCann towards the end of the series.

Don's quest for freedom was often intertwined with his search for intimacy and love, which he tended to seek in his numerous lovers. In episode 1.08, "The Hobo Code", Don goes to his lover Midge's apartment with two plane tickets to Paris, intending to get away. However, she has guests, and doesn't accept his invitation. Don, realizing that she has feelings for one of her guests, decides to be on his way. Right before he leaves the apartment, one of Midge's friends (who were anti-establishment and, by extension, anti-Draper) tells him that he can't leave because they were smoking marijuana and the police are in the building. But Don, boasting the freedom that his social status provides him, puts on his fedora and tells him: "you can't" (1.08 "The Hobo Code"), and politely nods to a policeman on his way out.

Don managed to have a more intimate connection with his other lover in season one, Rachel Menken. In episode 1.10 "Long Weekend", Don opens up to her about his childhood and tells her that he was an orphan, a fact that he had not even shared with his wife or anyone else at that point in the show. In episode 1.12 "Nixon vs. Kennedy", he attempts to convince Rachel to run away with him after being blackmailed by Pete Campbell with evidence that threatened to expose his past. He asks her to leave everything and go live with him someplace else, to "start over like Adam and Eve". Unlike Midge, Rachel did love Don, but she realized that she was just being used as an excuse to escape and dismisses Draper by telling him: "You don't want to run away with *me*. You just want to run *away*[10]".

Don, feeling isolated, attempts to use lovers as a way of curing his loneliness, given that he rarely opens up to anyone who is close to him. In a similar fashion, Willy Loman's feelings of solitude and insecurity led him to having an affair with The Woman. Willy wants to be masculine, but his wife seems to function more as a mother figure than as a wife. According to Luc Gilleman (154), Linda has the power to castrate Willy but chooses not to. Gilleman interprets the "little rubber pipe" (Miller, *Salesman* 47) and Willy's own name as symbols for the salesman's masculine and sexual inadequacy. Even Willy's surname Loman (low man) hints at an issue with size. Needing to feel validated both as a salesman and as a man, Willy found solace in the words of his lover, who told him things that he wanted to hear

[9] See *Mad Men* episode 3.13 "Shut the Door, Have a Seat". In this episode, Don calls McCann a sausage factory while crafting a plan with his co-workers to avoid Sterling Cooper from being bought by the McCann in yet another attempt to retain freedom at the workplace at the expense of money.

[10] Italics mine on "me" and "away".

about himself like: "I picked you" (Miller, *Salesman 28*), or: "I'll put you right through to the buyers" (29). She makes him feel important and manly, but the boost to his self-esteem was merely temporary. In spite of everything she tells him, Willy realizes his affair is merely a fantasy and that, in reality, it is empty and meaningless as he says to the Woman: "I'm so lonely" (92).

Gatsby, Willy and Draper try to find themselves outside themselves. By commodifying women, they intend to create a physical recipient for their spiritual longings, unaware that it is they who are the true objects of their quests. In the following section, we will discuss how the characters allowed their imagination to distort time and memory in order to create the ideal conditions for their dreams to be fulfilled.

5. The Time is Never Right: Memory, Nostalgia and Longing

To the dreamer, it seems that the present is never the right time to achieve his goals. He is constantly looking back at a past in which everything seemed ideal or looking forward to a future in which his goals might be achieved. Time, memory and nostalgia play a central role in how the individual defines himself in relation to the world. Gatsby, Willy and Don distort or deny the past in order to conceive a future that suits their objectives.

Gatsby attempts to recover the past by defying the logic of time. By doing this, Robert Ian Scott argues that Fitzgerald's protagonist is pitting his will against the second law of thermodynamics, which posits that: "entropy – disorganization or unavailable energy – increases as time goes by" (81). Gatsby's dream relies entirely on his ability to restore his life to the point where he believed it was perfect. "Can't repeat the past? […] Why of course you can! […] I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before" (Fitzgerald 106). However, the forces of nature collide with his romantic dream, rendering his mission impossible. Gatsby had idealized the autumn night of 1917 when he first wed his "unutterable visions" to Daisy's "perishable breath" (Fitzgerald 107), but the idea of himself that he was trying to recover no longer existed and, perhaps, never had. On the day that Gatsby is finally reunited with Daisy Nick realizes that the evening had not turned out to be exactly as Gatsby had expected it to. It had been five years since their last encounter and, since then, Gatsby's romantic imagination had idealized the idea of himself that had gone into loving Daisy to the extreme:

> There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams – not through her own fault – but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart (Fitzgerald 92, 93).

As discussed in the previous section, Gatsby viewed Daisy as a commodity, not a person so, for him, she wasn't subject to the passage of time. Despite the fact that Daisy, as an object of desire, remains immutable in Gatsby's mind, the reality of her relationship with Gatsby cannot match the protagonist's desire to erase the five years that had passed since their last encounter. Time remains an obstacle for Fitzgerald's protagonist to overcome. One of the ways that Gatsby's struggle is conveyed is through the use of images. There are two instances in the novel in which images of clocks function as a symbolic counterpoint to the hero's romantic aspirations. The first occurs during his encounter with Daisy at Nick's house, when Gatsby accidentally drops Nick's old clock. This seems to suggest that Gatsby almost stopped

time for a moment but not quite, since he caught it before it hit the ground. The second time a clock appears is in chapter six, when Nick is relating a flashback of Gatsby's past. This time image of the clock evokes the inexorable passage of time in contrast with Gatsby's self-image created by his romantic aspirations, symbolized by the moon:

> His heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque fantasies and conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself around in his brain while the clock ticked on the washstand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor (Fitzgerald 95).

According to Richard Lehan time is "ideally embodied in youth – with its romantic commitment and sense of potential" (192). For this reason, Gatsby attempts to recover a sense of self that he created from recollections of the past. Lehan (192) also states that Gatsby's development involves "movement from romantic commitment to romantic disillusionment". Slave to his romantic dream, the present was meaningless for Gatsby. He wanted to pick up where he left off, erasing everything that happened in between as if all he had done during the five years away from Daisy were just a mere formality in the grand scheme of things. He wanted Daisy to say that she had never loved Tom, thus undermining whatever achievements he might have made by asking of her the impossible. As R.W. Stallman says, he wanted to "wipe the slate clean and begin anew" (57). In chapter five, Klipspringer sings a song on the piano for Daisy and Gatsby. Part of the lyrics say "In the meantime,/In between time" (Fitzgerald 92), suggesting that Gatsby wants to live in a moment frozen in time. Stallman argues that, by trying to erase his past, Gatsby is trying to create a "hole in time". Blinded by his nostalgia and romantic aspirations, he believes he can make the past become his future. In Stallman's words:

> The Gatsby world is wrenched into confusion and disorder by Gatsby's two-way dream-into the past and into the future. "In the meantime/In between time"-what remains is the hole in time. As Gatsby cannot tell past from future, the present is the same for him as one or the other-now being for him the tomorrow he hopes to possess or the yesterday he hopes to recapture (58).

The romantic nostalgia that characterized Gatsby throughout the novel inevitably turned into disillusionment when he finally realized that he had invested so much imagination in Daisy that the image of her that he had created was nothing like the actual woman, that he had been after a person that only existed in his own mind. After the accident that culminated in Myrtle Wilson's death, Daisy had told Gatsby that she would call him, but the phone never rang and, according to Nick, Gatsby was not expecting it to ring anymore because he had finally levelled his aspirations with reality. Nick says:

> I have an idea that Gatsby himself no longer believed it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found out what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. (Fitzgerald 153).

Finding out that a rose is grotesque implies that one would have expected it to have been more than a flower, like Gatsby had expected Daisy to be more than what she really was. Judith Fetterly argues that Gatsby's romantic investment makes divestment inevitable, leading to "an exacerbated sense of failure" (106) caused by the enormity of the expectations created by his dream.

David Stouck suggests the possibility of reading *The Great Gatsby* as a pastoral and Gatsby's longing to recover a pristine past where everything was ideal seems to fit the psychology of the genre:

> While on the one hand [pastoral] embodies the escapist desire of the adult to return to the securely ordered world of childhood, it also involves a wish to relive the past in order to set right something that has gone wrong and has prevented the adult from living meaningfully in the present (68).

I believe this reading could also be applied to Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Willy idealized the way life was before the incident with the Woman happened, which could be considered as the moment where everything started to go wrong for him. Bigsby draws similarities between Miller's and Fitzgerald's protagonists, who failed to establish meaningful connections with others: "corrupted by dreams which simultaneously denied them access to the potential redemption of human connectiveness, they had reached out for some substitute for the meaning that had continued to elude them" (185). Gatsby and Willy's failure to focus on human relations instead of on "a mythical world of romance and affluence" (Bigsby 185) is what caused their dreams to collapse.

Like Gatsby, Willy created his own version of the ideal world through his memories. As discussed in the previous section, Willy associated his father with the ideal model of a man and longed to lead a life like the one that he had led. For Miller's protagonist, the ideal version of the world was the one his father had lived in, when a man could earn a living working with his hands, in touch with nature. The intention of the first stage direction in the play: "a melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees in the horizon" (Miller, *Salesman* 7) is to create an atmosphere of pastoral dreaminess, as the reader or spectator will come to associate the sound of the flute with Willy's father and, consequently, with the past that the protagonist considered ideal. Every time the play evokes a

natural environment, trees, leaves, woods, etc. we are drawn into Willy's pastoral vision of the world. When "the woods are burning" (84) Willy resorts to planting seeds, attempting to cling, in whatever way he can, to his vision of the world.

Reality, however, is far from the protagonist's imagined ideal worldview. Willy's house is surrounded by "towering, angular shapes" and "an angry glow of orange" (Miller, *Salesman* 7), thus highlighting the stark contrast between Willy's ideal version of a pastoral world and his actual situation. As Bigsby states: "Willy has lost the space which he needs for his dreams to assume any reality" (184). In a futile attempt to recover this idyllic space, Willy resorts to his memories and to his faith that at least his sons might live his misguided dream for him in the future.

Miller employs different techniques to convey Willy's mixing up of present and past. One of those techniques are stage directions[11] , that indicate the appearance or disappearance of leaves accompanied by the sound of music which, according to Leah Hadomi, establish "the rhythm between fantasy and reality" (22) as Willy perceives it. These directions function as queues for transitioning between Willy's state of mind in the present and his dreamy recollections of the past and vice versa.

However, present and past are not only intertwined through the use of stage directions, but also through setting and dialogue. During Willy's dream sequences, the imaginary walls of the house can be crossed whereas during the scenes set in the present day the actors must use doors: "Whenever the action is set in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping through a wall on to the forestage" (Miller, *Salesman* 7). By employing this technique, Miller breaks the dramatic unities of time and space by introducing multiple times and spaces. As Szondi states: "there is no real change in the setting, and, at the same time, it is perpetually transformed" (Bloom, *Salesman* 10). Miller represents Willy's confusion with time and memory by deliberately employing the same setting for past and present scenes.

Finally, this mixing of past and present is also made apparent through dialogue. Perhaps the most paradigmatic example of this is a conversation between Willy and his neighbor

[11]Stage directions indicating the appearance of leaves on stage in *Death of a Salesman*: "The apartment houses are fading out, and the entire house and surroundings become covered with leaves. Music insinuates itself as the leaves appear" (21). "As he speaks, LINDA, almost in tears, exits into the living room. WILLY is alone in the kitchen, wilting and staring. The leaves are gone. It is night again, and the apartment houses look down from behind" (31). "A single trumpet note jars the ear. The light of green leaves stains the house, which holds the air of night and a dream" (86). "The music has developed into a dead march. The leaves of day are appearing over everything" (108).

Charley in which Willy maintains a three-way chat with Charley and his dead brother Ben while they are playing cards:

> WILLY: Sure, sure! If I'd gone with him to Alaska that time, everything would've been totally different.
> CHARLEY: Go on, you'd froze to death up there.
> WILLY: What're you talking about?
> BEN: Opportunity is tremendous in Alaska, William. Surprised you're not up there.
> WILLY: Sure, tremendous.
> CHARLEY: Heh?
> WILLY: There was the only man I ever met who knew the answers.
> CHARLEY: Who?
> BEN: How are you all?
> WILLY [*taking a pot, smiling*]: Fine, fine.
> CHARLEY: Pretty sharp tonight.
> BEN: Is Mother living with you?
> WILLY: No, she died a long time ago.
> CHARLEY: Who?
> BEN: That's too bad. Fine specimen of a lady, Mother.
> WILLY [*to* CHARLEY]: Heh?
> BEN: I'd hoped to see the old girl.
> CHARLEY: Who died?
> BEN: Heard anything from Father, have you?
> WILLY [*unnerved*]: What do you mean, who died?
> CHARLEY [*taking a pot*]: What're you talkin' about?

Willy cannot distinguish present from past. This confusion distorts his perception of reality – Willy is unable to respond to the world in a way that he can be understood. In fact, if a reader ignores Ben's lines and focuses only on the dialogue between Willy and his neighbor Charley's confusion becomes even more apparent and Willy's lines are rendered even more nonsensical. Immersed in his dream, Willy loses touch with reality.

The role of time and memory in *Mad Men* is as crucial in the series as it is in Miller's play or in Fitzgerald's novel. However, the way the theme is approached is slightly different. Don Draper, as opposed to Willy or Gatsby, is hyper-aware of reality and has a quite bleak and cynical view of the world: "You're born alone, and you die alone, and this world just drops a bunch of rules on you to make you forget those facts, but I never forget" (1.01 "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"). Although he never forgets, Don is intent on doing so. He rejects his past and is extremely reluctant to talk about it even to those closest to him. This denial of a part of himself reinforces his feeling of isolation, of being a stranger to those he loves. He makes the same mistakes over and over again, moving forward and never dealing with the aftermath of his past actions. It is not until his wife discovers a box of pictures of his younger days that Don realizes that he can't hide from his past any longer, which allows him to be more and more open about it and, hence, to start healing.

The role of time and memory in the show, however, goes beyond Don's personal recollections and interpretations of his past. Don is the main character through which the audience can identify, so they experience his world through his eyes. *The Great Gatsby* and *Death of a Salesman* are set around the same time that they were published, but *Mad Men*, which was created in 2007, is not commenting on its contemporary society, but on the society of a past time. Don must realize and accept his past mistakes in order to grow as a person just as America as a country must look back and make critical judgements in order to improve as a country. *Mad Men* explores both individual and collective self-examination through the lens of time.

An individual, as part of a collective, comes to represent the society of her time. In episode 4.02 "Christmas Comes but Once a Year", Dr Faye Miller, Don's co-worker and lover, tells him that he is "a type". Through Don, we recover the notion of the ideal of masculinity in the 1960s. Denise Witzig describes the relationship between the character and the story as being "about identity and, with it, a critique of historical masculinity" (179). Don represents the obsolete masculine ideal of an era, a lost "masculine cool" (Witzig 180). However, even though viewers may find many things about him to be unacceptable, his 1960s masculinity makes him both attractive and repulsive at the same time. Although Don is a liar, a heavy drinker, a bad husband and a bad father, Witzig argues that his charm stems from nostalgia. Inside the narrative of the show, Don points out how powerfully nostalgia can affect people, using it as the number one tool in the Kodak Carousel campaign. Don says:

> Nostalgia. It's delicate but potent. […] Teddy told me that in Greek, nostalgia literally means the pain from an old wound. It's a twinge in your heart far more powerful than memory alone. This device isn't a space ship. It's a time machine. It goes backwards, forwards. It takes us to a place where we ache to go again. It's not called the Wheel. It's called the Carousel. It lets us travel the way a child travels. Around and around and back home again to a place where we know we are loved.

Although his definition isn't, perhaps, etymologically exact, Don has a point. The human memory is imperfect and irremediably subjective, a real event can be warped into whatever one chooses to make of it. The slide projector allows people to see whatever part of their past that they wish to remember. On the other hand, *Mad Men* conveys an image of the past that it does not want its audiences to forget. It reminds us of the danger of being anchored to the past while at the same time making us excited to see how it actually was. The show forces the viewers to undergo a process of self-scrutiny as they follow Don in his own journey

of self-examination. Acceptance, and not denial, leads to healing[12]. Instead of hiding the past, one must come to terms with it to be able to move on.

[12] See Screen Prism: *Who is Don Draper?* for a more detailed and visual analysis of Don Draper as a character.

6. Conclusion

What a 1920s novel, a 1940s drama and a 2010s television series have in common is that their protagonists are pursuing the American Dream. Depicting different versions of the Dream is a common thread throughout most American fiction. I have only analyzed three cases, but I believe it is enlightening that these three completely different genres, set in different time periods, still share many of the same themes, which always seem to trace back to the Dream and the way in which its pursuit affects the dreamers. Gatsby, Willy and Draper are fundamentally different characters: a romantic idealist who managed to amass a fortune, a travelling salesman with dreams of grandeur and a cynical advertising executive who is extremely successful in business but still disenchanted with life. As I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, these characters are outsiders who feel they need to find their place in the world. Despite their differences in character and the different time periods in which their stories are set, their dreams and struggles are extremely similar. Great American fiction has always attempted to explore and explain the mythical Dream, as Jim Cullen wrote "the American Dream is most fully realized in works of art" (179). Fiction and the Dream are so intricately intertwined because they are sustained on the same premise: creating something from nothing (Weinstein 140-141).

If American fiction tends to deal with the Dream, then what are these works saying about it? I believe that they are sustaining it while at the same time criticizing it. As Bigsby says, they convey hope and betrayal: "the hope and betrayal seen by America's writers from Cooper and Twain to Fitzgerald and beyond" ("Arthur Miller: Poet" 66). Gatsby and Willy are betrayed by their dreams, but Nick and Biff embody the hope that the dream allows. Because of Gatsby's vision, Nick is able to see that there is a glimmer of light amidst all the corruption and superficiality of the world around him. Biff supposedly learns from his father's mistake and, like Don Draper, he begins to look inward instead of outward. The most important point that these works make about the Dream is that it should always be focused on authenticity, on bringing the individual closer to a state of happiness whereas the critique is centered precisely on the wrong focus that the dream has come to acquire, centering on material success and appearances rather than on self-understanding and self-acceptance.

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Appendix: Cited Episodes of *Mad Men*

1.01 “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes”

1.05 “Five G”

1.08 “The Hobo Code”

1.10 “Long Weekend”

1.11 “Indian Summer”

1.12 “Nixon vs. Kennedy”

1.13 “The Wheel”

2.01 “For Those Who Think Young”

4.02 “Christmas Comes but Once a Year”

6.13 “In Care of”

7.07 “Waterloo”

7.09 “New Business”

7.12 “Lost Horizon”

7.13 “The Milk and the Honey Route”

7.14 “Person to Person”